

THE RIVALRY OF THE DAY IN THE OBSERVER

RUNAWAY JUNE BY GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER AND LILLIAN CHESTER

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AT SHERRY'S Runs Each Wednesday and Thursday

TWELFTH EPISODE.

The Spirit of the Marsh.

CHAPTER I.

A STEAM yawl, with black smoke pouring from her stovepipe, suddenly stopped its churning halfway across New York bay as the principal passenger, a long nosed woman with high arched brows, recognized through a wabbly jointed telescope the leaders in a procession of five speedy motorboats which swept rapidly toward her.

"Turn around quick!" the woman ordered as the first motorboat bore down, and she dashed a cinder from her beady eye. "Here comes the runaway bride!"

"I'm turning her now, ma'am," reported a short, thick individual whose round face was one consecutive smudge. "Don't you hear our engines stopping?"

"There she goes!" screamed Honoria Blye as the long, narrow steel gray boat flashed past, bearing, besides its driver, a beautiful young girl in a yachting costume, protected as much as possible from the flying spray in the arm of a mail man with a soft felt hat and a loosely knotted cravat.

"Why, she isn't with my husband!" cried Honoria Blye. "No'ma," confessed Bill Wolf, putting a fresh smudge on his round face as the cinder laden smoke rolled down: "not now." His perplexity cleared. He spied the second boat. "There he comes!"

"Gilbert!" screamed the woman as the second boat shot by, driven by a heavy man with a round head and thick lidded eyes and carrying as its passenger a dark, handsome man with a black Vandyke, whose whole attention was fixed on the beautiful girl in the forward boat. "Gilly! The dark,



Ned Warner Gritted His Teeth and Clinched His Fists.

handsome man paid no attention. "You viper!" she shrieked; then she whirled to Bill Wolf. "Why don't you turn this around and chase them?"

"We're turning, ma'am," reported Bill Wolf, looking anxiously in at the engineer. "Don't you hear the engine reversing?"

The third boat shot past, driven by a white mustached man in evening clothes.

"That's the creature who corrupted my husband!" shrieked Honoria. "He was with Gilbert the night he took his trunk away! You beast!" she screamed, and then she caught sight of the occupants in the fourth boat, a little chauffeur with blazing eyes and the thickest of mustaches and a stiff woman, who bent eagerly forward.

"The maid of the runaway bride!" explained the justly famous detective, Bill Wolf. "Do you notice that we're turning now, ma'am?"

"Ned Warner, the deserted groom!" announced Honoria Blye as the fifth boat darted past. Ned held binoculars to his eyes, and they were focused alternately on beautiful June Warner in the arm of the artist and upon the closely pursuing Gilbert Blye. With him were a plump and placid small man, who drove with unwelcome creases in his brow, and a generously plump young woman, who was half hysterical.

"We're turned, ma'am," said Bill Wolf, clutching Honoria Blye by the elbow. "Don't you see the Federal building?"

On the dock there stood a watchman who consisted of an overcoat and cap, and silently, motionlessly, hour by hour

ly lifted beautiful June Warner. The overcoat and cap moved not a muscle, but from far off Ned Warner, in the fifth boat of that strange regatta, through his powerful binoculars saw that landing, saw June cling to her newly found protector, saw, from the bend of his head, that the artist's eyes were filled with appreciation for the beauty of the fair little runaway bride. Straight up the dock they ran to the street and hailed a passing taxi and whirled away.

A keen little racer dashed up, spraying the water in a glittering translucent sheet as it curved into the slip. From it sprang the black Vandyked Gilbert Blye in time to see the taxicab whirl away with beautiful June. Through his powerful binoculars Ned Warner saw Blye gesticulating with anger, saw the heavy, round headed Edwards climb clumsily upon the dock and stamp his foot.

A third boat, a trim, little white cutter. From it scrambled the little mustached Orin Cunningham. Through his powerful binoculars Ned Warner saw Cunningham, too, give way to a fit of fury, and Ned finally gritted his teeth and clinched his fists as he saw these scoundrelly pursuers of his lovely bride race up the dock. They hailed a passing taxi and whirled away up the street.

A fourth boat, a little French chauffeur with a tiny mustache and a stiff woman with high cheek bones, who bent and unbent painfully as she was pulled to the dock.

"Hey!" The overcoat and cap at last had moved, rapidly, violently. They pounced between Henri and Marie. "You're pinched!"

"Pinched, monsieur? Impossible!" protested Henri in astonishment. "For what is it that we are pinched? Behold the boat! We have returned it." Marie started to run away.

"Hooray!" On his side Henri jerked and, laughing gaily, sprinted after Marie. Up on the street, in the shelter of a warehouse, stood a touring car. As he ran Henri reached in his pocket for a key. Behind them came potting the overcoat and cap, blowing a shrill watchman's whistle through the slit in the collar. The fugitive from justice, easily outdistancing the heavy rubber boots, galloped the car. With a howl which had in it all the grace and galvanic which could have been displayed had he used much more time Henri assisted Marie to her seat. He sprang in beside her. He inserted his key. He pressed the starting button. Silence! Bah! The motor was cold!

"You're under arrest!" And an iron-like middle finger thumped Henri on the shoulder. A policeman had arrived. "Arrest, M. Officer?" cried Henri. "Impossible." And he made another effort to start his engine. "Look, the boat we have!"

"Do you know Officer Dowd?" asked Marie.

"Dowd?" repeated the solemn policeman, shaking his head.

"Do you know Officer Moran?"

"Can't say as I know Moran."

"Do you know Officer O'Toole?" And she beamed high up into the solemn policeman's face.

"O'Toole? O'Toole? East side?"

"Listen, M. Officer, eh?" broke in Henri.

Marie had furtively kicked him on the shins.

"We took the boat, yes, but you will comprehend, monsieur!"

"Get it? He says he took the boat!" This was from the cap and the overcoat.

"Take 'em along!" rumbled the cap and overcoat.

"I guess I'll have to take you," the officer said regretfully. "Will you walk or will you ride? It's only up a couple of blocks."

"Walk!" exclaimed Henri in astonishment. "Never!" He rushed to the front of his car and cranked it. Off they went to the police station.

CHAPTER II.

A FURTIVE eyed butler with a young face on the withered and stooped body of an old man admitted the runaway bride and her escort into a magnificent studio hung with rare tapestries, embellished with exquisite paintings, fitted with quaint furniture and objects of art from all over the world. And here June Warner was introduced by Artist Durban to his wife, a bright eyed woman of great charm. She received June with almost gushing cordiality.

"The Spirit of the Marshes," laughed Durban, and it was with a professional eye that he this time surveyed the beautiful girl. "It was an utterly impossible adventure, my dear." He stood before an elaborately carved Florentine table, while the ladies sat in the Inglenook, in the flare of the grateful fire. His eyes still glowed with the excitement of the morning, and he laughed. "First time I've had a chance to use the revolvers you make me carry when I go out for the marsh sunrise. I was busy sketching, trying to catch that wonderful scurlet of the sun and the mist—you know, my dear—when suddenly I heard a piercing scream. It could come but from one direction—the hut. Immense! A real adventure! I folded my easel, drew my revolvers and told Jimmy to push through the reeds for life or

death. Before we could reach the hut there were shrieks upon shrieks in a young girl's voice, then shots, one after another. Wonderful! He shook back his long hair and laughed, and his wife paled. June trembled and grew faint with the memory of it, and her eyes distended with a recurrence



June as "the Spirit of the Marsh."

of her terror. "As we burst through the tall marsh rushes I saw on the island this beautiful creature held by a gigantic murderer. A woman with a beautiful silk shawl over her rough clothing was running toward the hut. Another murderous thief was lying on the ground. Down the channel from the open water there came two speed boats, one driven by a man with a mustache, in evening clothes and a silk hat, and the other, driven by a round headed man, carried a dark, handsome fellow with a black Vandyke, who stood up shooting two revolvers. I fired in the air. The gigantic murderer dropped this beautiful creature, and she ran shrieking to my boat, in terror not only of the desperate bandit, but of the men in the boats. Jimmy threw on full speed and away we darted, hotly pursued by an entire bay full of shouting, gesticulating people. It was marvelous! I have never enjoyed such a morning!"

"You poor dear!" The artist's wife was instantly contrite. "You must be tired and cold and half famished and frightened to death. And you're all wet!" She raised June by the hand.

"The Spirit of the Marsh," mused the artist, studying June critically.

Mrs. Durban's bright eyes sparkled back at him as she led June away to her own rooms, where she selected a negligee for her beautiful charge.

In a richly furnished office which contained no hint of business except for its telephone and the long rows of push buttons sat Gilbert Blye and Orin Cunningham and T. J. Edwards in earnest conference, Cunningham still in his evening clothes, Edwards still with his pajamas buttoned inside his coat and the carpet slippers on his feet. Button after button the black Vandyked man pushed, and one after another silent, stealthily moving, non-communicative men came in and with grave faces received their instructions and departed.

Henri and Marie stood in front of a mottled faced desk sergeant with a sausage-like red mustache.

"Your names," he demanded.

"Voilà!" agreeably returned Henri.

"I am—ugh!" And he lifted his foot sharply. Marie had kicked him on the shins.

"He is Jules Lefon," snapped Marie.

"Non! Non! Non!" indignantly objected Henri, and there ensued a vigorous argument.

"And I am Rose Hesper," calmly finished Marie.

"What's the charge?" asked the desk sergeant.

"Swiping a boat." This hoarse information came from the overcoat and cap.

"I don't know about the Frenchman," whispered the phenomenally long policeman in the sergeant's red ear, "but the girl seems to be all right. She knows Officer Dowd on the east side and Moran and O'Toole and that bunch."

"Oh!" The information seemed to have some weight. The officer raised heavily from his wide chair and waddled through the door just back of him. He was gone long, silent minutes, but when he came back his brow was knotted into what seemed permanent corrugations. "So you're a friend of Dowd and Moran and O'Toole and that bunch?" he thundered at the luckless Marie. "Well, I telephoned 'em all, and not a one of 'em knows any Rose Hesper! Lock 'em up!"

"But, monsieur, it is a mistake!" cried the pseudo Jules Lefon. "Made-moiselle is no!"

Crack! That kick on the shin was distinctly audible throughout the little room, but it had its effect. Henri at last had the hint, and he shut his lips tightly together beneath his tiny mustache as he and Marie, to the intense gratification of the overcoat and cap, were led away and locked in their respective cells.

In the dainty rose and white drawing room which Ned and June Warner had fitted up to be their nest Ned sat in consultation with June's father and mother and Bobbie Blethering and June's bosom friend, Iris, and the three detectives. On the floor by Mrs. Moore's feet lay June's handsome colie, Bouncer, but at the first mention of his mistress' name he was up and barking loudly.

"Your wife's dog?" said the chief of Ned's detective force, and Ned nodded. "We'll take him."

Out in the bay a steam yawl, its stovepipe cold, was being towed majestically in by a rowboat, at the oars of which sat a thin whiskered fisherman and a boy with cracked knuckles and a short, thick man, whose face was one continuous rotary smudge. This man

est toll. On board the yawl and urging her crew with helpful voices and gesture was Honoria Blye, cinders in her high arched brows, cinders in her darkened hair and cinders in her disposition.

How cheerful was the blazing fire as June reclined in the Inglenook, a cup of hot coffee on a taboret by her side and a comfortable drowsiness stealing over her! She did not know how pretty she was in the filmy negligee, but Bennett and Vivian Durban did as they sat at the little studio table, which was their favorite breakfast place, and turned pleased eyes upon their beautiful guest.

Their pleasure in June, however, was scarcely equal to the charming picture of domesticity which they afforded June. It was such pleasant companionship that she had expected to enjoy with Ned, just they two alone. But that tete-a-tete breakfast was yet to come. How long must it be to the end of that separation which had begun on their wedding day, begun in only a few fleeting hours after their marriage? The happiness had lasted only through the going away amid a shower of rice and through those first blissful moments alone in the Pullman drawing room, surrounded by their white ribboned luggage.

In the richly furnished office one after another of the silent, grave faced, stealthily moving men came in and gave their low voiced reports to the eager Cunningham, the confident Blye, the impatient Edwards. At last one of the men brought in a fellow who bore a young face on the stooped and withered figure of an old man. This fellow approached the table furtive eyed on Blye's invitation, and they all mumbled together for awhile in low voices. He put something in his pocket as he went out, and he left the three men laughing. They rose to go. They had finished their office work.

A butler brought in the mail to the Durban as they finished their breakfast. Durban walked out toward the



"A deed to this house!" she cried.

garden. He seemed anxious to conceal something. His wife followed. Durban opened a long envelope with an expectant smile and took from it a folded document.

"My dear"—his voice vibrated with pleasure—"can't keep my secret. Tomorrow is the fourth anniversary of our wedding, and here is my gift in commemoration of that happy event."

Her eyes shining, the woman took the document and opened it.

"A deed to this house!" she cried.

"And all that it contains," laughed her husband, "everything, including myself."

There was an exclamation of delight. The woman kissed him again and again and called him a dear boy and a good boy and the best husband in the world. June, who had awakened and followed them, drew back, so they would not know that she had heard, but she was glad for once to have been an unwitting eavesdropper, glad to have shared in this joyous moment.

CHAPTER III

DOWN at the dock Ned Warner's detectives appeared, and Bouncer, picking up the trail at the landing, ran excitedly up to the street at the point where June and Bennett Durban had taken the taxi. Bouncer began to go round and round in widening circles, whining, his nose close to the ground. The trail was lost, as they had known that trail would be, and from here the detectives scattered, seeking everywhere in their own methods for a clew to the whereabouts of the runaway bride. As they left the vicinity a rowboat pulled slowly up to the dock, dragging behind it a steam yawl with frosty mist on its stovepipe, and a very much begrimed lady with a long nose and high arched brows landed and went away without a word, pausing only to cast a look of withering scorn at the well known and justly famous private detective, Bill Wolf. That short, thick individual, with much puffing exertion, scrambled up and renewed the smudge on his face with a rotary motion of his sleeve and swore profusely; then he, too, stomped away.

Blye and Edwards and Cunningham in a luxurious limousine stopped at a house, where they were ushered into a gay parlor. A large blond woman came in to greet the callers, and to her Blye

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